

S E R M O N,

Preached before the Honourable

694.1.18.
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HOUSE of COMMONS;

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St. Margaret's, Westminster :

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Wednesday, January xxx. MDCCLXV.

By RICHARD HIND, D. D.

Rector of SHERING, in *Essex*; and Chaplain to the Right Rev.
the Lord Bishop of LONDON.

L O N D O N:

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M.DCC.LXV.

STUDY OF THE

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Jovis, 31 Die Januarii, 1765.

Ordered,

That the Thanks of this House be given to the Rev. Doctor *Hind*, for the Sermon by him preached Yesterday before this House, at St. *Margaret's Westminster*, and that he be desired to print the same; and that Mr. *Ryder*, and Mr. *Bacon*, do acquaint him therewith.

T. TYRWHITT, *Cl. Dom. Com.*

Y. J. [illegible]

Oct. 11

I have the pleasure to inform you that the
Rev. Doctor has accepted the position of
pastor of the church and will be
installed on the 1st of November.
I am, Sir, very respectfully,
Yours, Sir, very respectfully,
[illegible]

[illegible]

2 COR. iii. 17th verse, latter part.

—*Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.*

THE whole Verse runs thus—*Now the Lord is that Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.* And the meaning of it may be this—the Lord is the Giver of that Spirit; from Him receiv'd I my Commission to publish his Spiritual Dispensation; and a Commission deriv'd from such an Authority justifies my freedom and openness in the Discharge of it—for *where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.*

But a System, thus favourable to the Ministerial claims of the Apostle, may be thought perhaps to be equally unfavourable to the Liberty of the people. And the next Step will be to a Conclusion, that *where Liberty is not, there is not the Spirit of the Lord.* Let us therefore give this point a little Attention, by an Enquiry into the Nature and Extent of Liberty in general; or in other Words, how far Liberty, in any Sense whatever, is affected by the Rules of the Gospel.

Liberty may be distinguish'd into Natural and Moral, Civil and Religious; or as respecting Man, either as he is a Natural or a Moral Agent; a

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Member of a Civil Community, or of a Religious Establishment: and the Nature and Limits of Christian Liberty wou'd be sufficiently ascertain'd by our determining what Influence it hath upon Man, in each of those Situations: But want of Time must, on this occasion, confine me to the three former Heads of Enquiry.

I. In regard to the first of these, it is obvious that Christianity can have made no alteration; but must have left Men, as they were, and ever had been from the foundation of the World, in respect to their Natural Liberty. For Natural Liberty being nothing more than a Creature's power of acting or not acting, in all instances that lie within the Sphere of it's Activity; it follows, that all Men, at all times, and indeed all Active Beings whatever, are in this respect equally free. They may have different degrees of Natural power, different Spheres of Activity; but their Liberty of acting or not acting within those limits, will be equally perfect. Inability to act beyond them is implied in the very Terms: but this is no Impeachment of a Creature's Natural Liberty; unless we will say that a Being is not Free, because it is not Omnipotent. This therefore is a Sort of Liberty, that admits of no difference of Degree — Incapable of diminution, as that wou'd destroy the very nature of the Subject, and introduce a Passive Necessity; incapable of increase, because as we cannot conceive in any Creature a Capacity of
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less, so we cannot imagine in any a Capacity of *more* liberty, than that of acting or forbearing to act. It is a Sort of Liberty, which, tho' a necessary Condition of Moral Agency, is no formal part of it. There cannot be Moral Agency without Natural Freedom; but there may be Natural Freedom without Moral Agency. It is a Principle common to Man and the Brute—a merely animal power; not given in larger proportions, or confin'd to particular Characters; but equally to be found in the Good and the Vicious. And we may conclude therefore, that it is something else than the Existence of this invariable and uniform Principle, which is insisted on as a Gospel-Privilege, as a Characteristick of the Spirit of God; and that the Liberty of Nature is not what is meant by the Freedom of Grace.

II. But the Natural Power is One thing; and the Use and Application of it is another. The Faculty may and must remain without Diminution or Increase; but the Exercise and Application of it may be left at large, or restrain'd. And it will be found upon Enquiry, that the Existence and Perfection of true Moral Freedom is really the Consequence of those salutary Restraints that are laid upon Natural Liberty; and that the power which the Mind hath of acting contrary to those Restraints is, in truth, a natural power of enslaving itself.

Now, upon turning our thoughts inwards on ourselves, and reflecting upon the Frame and Constitu-

tion of our Nature ; do we not find, that over and above this, and other merely Animal powers, we are possessed of the Superior Faculties of Reason and Conscience ; by which we perceive a difference in Actions, in themselves and their Consequences ; and feel the opposite Sensations of Pleasure or Pain, of Self-approbation or Remorse, in reviewing our own Conduct ? And what can this be, but the still, awful Voice of God (and at our peril be it ! if we hear it not) thus speaking in us, that we are Moral Agents,—creatures of a Complex Frame, having Passions, Liberty, and Reason ; not as so many independent Principles, but bearing certain Relations to each other. We have Passions, to impell ; we have Liberty to obey, or resist those Impulses, according as the Understanding shall pronounce the one or the other to be the reasonable part.

Human Nature is plainly a System ; in itself a regular, moral System ; the Result of different corresponding parts, that in respect to each other are Supreme and Subordinate. In every Civil System, there must be a Sovereign Authority, to which the several Members of the Community shall be subject : and in this Moral Constitution of Human Nature, tho' there are several inferior Principles, invested with different powers and serving different Ends, yet are they all of them Subordinate to the Supreme governing Principle.

Had we no way of forming our Judgment but from the general Practice of the World ; then we might
 3 doubt

doubt indeed, where to place this Supremacy. Or rather, we shou'd readily assign it to the Passions; and conclude without hesitation that the Divine Principle of Reason was meant only for their Vassal and Minister. But however frequent it may be to lodge the Power in wrong hands: yet, none who reflect, can doubt; none who are not abandon'd, and lost to all Moral Sense, can help feeling, where Nature hath fix'd the Seat of Authority. And if Reason, tho' too generally prostituted to the Gratification of Appetite, was not intended to obey, but to govern; not to administer to the Passions, but to regulate and restrain them; then Natural Liberty is a Power of the Mind, which we may not use as we please; but the more it is directed by the Superior Principle, the more agreeable will our Conduct be to the Rectitude and Perfection of our Nature; Reason then maintains it's natural and undoubted Sovereignty against the Usurpation of the Passions; and we ourselves are most truly and properly Free.

Whatever the Sensualist may think, or however he may affect to harangue upon Liberty, placing it in an unrestrain'd Indulgence of every wild and irregular Appetite; 'tis certain that not only Scripture, but Heathen Wisdom inculcates far different Notions of it. By the light of Nature, Men of thought and improvement saw and lamented the Irregularities of the Moral World. They consider'd every base or unjust Action, every irregular Indulgence of the Sensual Principle as an unnatural Incroachment upon
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on the Dominion of the Rational one; and though unable to assign the Cause, or to point out the Remedy of this Moral Disorder, they were, in general, sensible of it's Reality. The State of Corrupt Nature is in like manner represented in Scripture, as a State of the most painful Bondage and Servitude—as a *Law in our Members, warring against the Law of our Minds, and bringing us into Captivity to the Law of Sin.* To be releas'd from this Sensual Captivity; to be under the dominion of Reason, paying an uniform Obedience to the Divine Will, (which is the most perfect Reason) howsoever made known to us; to be inclin'd by the best Motives, and do the thing which is Right, This is to be *Free indeed.* This is to be truly and properly *the Sons of God.* The more uniformly Men act up to this Character, the nearer approaches do they make towards the Perfection of their Supreme Father, who is infinitely Free, and at the same time is invariably and necessarily determin'd by the Principles of perfect Rectitude, Holiness, and Truth.

If this be a just Account of Moral Freedom, we may advance a Step farther, and say, that an Enquiry whether the Gospel be a Dispensation of Liberty, is in fact an Enquiry, whether it be a Dispensation of Purity and Righteousness—a point confess'd on all hands,—even in the Complaints of those, who love and obey it least.

But, where is the great Privilege (may the Libertine say) of being made subject to this Law of Righteousness,

Righteousness, without Ability to observe it? A perfect System of Duty may serve to convince Men of their Captivity ; but can be of no Service to degenerate sinful Creatures, in re-asserting their Rational Freedom. The Gospel, if it fails in this point, is not what it pretends to be ; it is the Spirit of *Bondage unto Fear* : it is not the Spirit of *Power*, or of *Love*, or of *Liberty*.

But *Mercy and Judgment have met together ; Righteousness and Peace have kissed each other*. In this exalted System of Moral Conduct, we have all the Motives and Encouragements, all the Aids and Assistances, that are proper to influence and support a Rational Nature. Our Hopes and Fears, the most active and powerful Springs of the Human Mind, are address'd by the awful Sanctions of endless Happiness and Misery. The Weaknesses of our Nature are mercifully reliev'd, by more plentiful Communications of the Divine Grace, and by the Provision made for the Acceptance of a penitent Return to Duty and Obedience, thro' the all-sufficient Merits of *One mighty to save*. These are the Gracious Terms of the Gospel-Covenant, by which it stands oppos'd, as a perfect Law of Liberty, to the unrelenting Constitution of the Natural, and to the painful Bondage of the Mosaical Law. The Liberty of it, in short, consists in a Freedom from the Power, and from the Penalties of Sin. It is a Liberty, admirably suited to the Circumstances of Man, and to the Justice and Goodness of God : equally adapted to the
Improvement

Improvement of our Rational, and to the Exigencies of our Weak and Degenerate Nature : irreconcilably repugnant to the Moral Slavery of Vice and Licentiousness ; but not severe to require the unattainable Heights of a sinless Perfection.

III. But if Evangelical Freedom consists in restoring the Superiority of Reason, it's general Influence upon Human Conduct is obvious : it must have a natural Tendency to rectify and improve Men's behaviour in every Social Relation : it is equally friendly to the Moral and Civil Interests of Mankind. For Civil Relations are Moral Relations. From the Nature and Circumstances of Mankind, it became necessary, that they shou'd form themselves into Societies : but from Society, however originally introduc'd and extended, results a regular Subordination of it's Members ; wherein, some being commission'd to govern, others are bound to obey. So that Government, as being necessary to Man's Social Nature, was the Ordinance of God ; and a Conduct best suited to the Ends of Government, in the Subject and the Magistrate, became a point of Natural Duty.

Christianity therefore, which supersedes no one Natural Duty, cannot intend any such Enlargement of Men's Civil Liberties, as wou'd break in upon Government. The Servant is not releas'd from his Servitude ; nor the Wife from her Subjection to her Husband ; nor the Subject from his Duty and Allegiance

Allegiance to his Governor. A Liberty of this kind, by unhinging Society and Government, must have sadly verified, what our Blessed Saviour foretold as the accidental Consequence of his appearance in the World, that he *came not to bring Peace upon Earth, but a Sword* : it cou'd not proceed from that Being who is a God of Order, and not of Confusion : it must have ended in the only worse State than that of Civil Slavery—in Anarchy and wild Misrule ; and, by brutalizing Human Nature, in Moral Slavery too. And yet This (opposite as it is to the pacifick Spirit of Christianity) was the Notion, soon advanc'd and propagated of Christian Liberty.—A Notion, which by alarming the Jealousy and inflaming the Resentment of the Civil Powers, in the Infancy of the Gospel, might have prov'd fatal to it's Interests. St. Peter therefore earnestly calls upon the Christian Converts, by their own discreet and dutiful deportment, *to put to Silence the Ignorance of such foolish Men*, who knew not what manner of Spirit they were of ; tho' they were *free*, not *to use their Liberty as a Cloak of Maliciousness*, but *as the Servants of God ; to honour all Men ; to love the Brotherhood ; to fear God, honour the King*.

The Truth is, that Liberty (if by Liberty be perversely meant, a Right to disobey a lawful Authority) hath no place in the Christian System. Civil Subjection receives an additional, and that a most powerful Sanction from the Gospel ; being expressly bound upon Men, as every Duty indeed ultimately must be, by the Authority of God. The Servant is

call'd upon, to be faithful and obedient to his Master, *not with Eye-service, as Men-pleasers, but as the Servants of Christ.* The Wife must *submit herself unto her own husband, as unto the Lord.* And every Soul must be *Subject unto the higher powers, as unto the Ordinance of God.*

Equal provision is made too, for suitable returns of Love, and Gentleness, and Fatherly affection from those invested with Authority. Masters must give unto their *Servants that which is just and equal, knowing that themselves also have a Master in Heaven.* Husbands must *love their Wives, and not be bitter against them.* And Rulers must *not be a Terror to good Works, but to the Evil.* Such a Conduct, in short, is required from every Station, as, if uniformly pursued, wou'd maintain Harmony and Concord between the several Members of a Community. The Gospel is equally at variance with Slavery of every kind. The Liberty of it is not a Release from the Laws of Morality; it is not a Privilege of speaking Evil of Dignities, or of rebelling against Government and Civil Establishments. But an uniform adherence to the great Lines of Duty mark'd out to us in those general Precepts of rendering to all their Dues—*Tribute to whom Tribute is due, Fear to whom Fear, Love to whom Love, Honour to whom Honour*—wou'd secure to the Magistrate such a Measure of Obedience, and to the Subject as much Civil Liberty, as, in the present State of things, is most consistent with our Well-being and Happiness.

Farther

Farther than this, Christianity concerneth not itself. The Divine Author of it, by declaring his Kingdom to be *not of this World*, hath disclaim'd the being *a Ruler or a Judge* of Men's Civil Claims, arising from this or that Species of Government. The Great Errand He came upon, was, to reform Men's Hearts, and not to regulate the Policy of States or of Kingdoms; or, in mixt Governments, to ascertain the Boundaries of Prerogative and Privilege between the Prince and the People. These were Particularities, to be determin'd by the Laws and Constitutions of each respective Community: They cou'd make no part of a System that was meant to be the One Religion of all Mankind; unless indeed that great Event, which shall one day be accomplish'd in a Spiritual Sense, had instantly taken place in a temporal one too; and all the Kingdoms of the Earth had been equally of one Faith, and of one Form of Government.

But still, under any Form whatever of Human Polity, Christianity, by mending the Hearts of Individuals, wou'd give that Form the greatest possible Advantage in securing Peace and Good Order; and wou'd, in general, produce the happiest Change in the Political Interests of Mankind. It's Influence would be considerable, under the worst of Constitutions:—happy had it been for Us who live under the best, if this gentle Spirit of the Gospel had, upon all Occasions, directed the Counsels of the Great and the Mighty of this World. By regulating all the

Selfish and Turbulent Affections, it wou'd have gone very far in preventing exorbitant Claims of every kind ; and in case of Abuses (as Abuses must happen in the most perfect Systems of Human Policy) it wou'd have produc'd more Moderation and Temper in reforming them.

The melancholy Effects of the Contrary Spirit were most severely felt in those Times of Distraction, that preceded and follow'd the Tragical Event of this Day.

From false Principles of Government, imbib'd from Education, cherish'd by Flattery, justified by some unfaithful Sages of the Law, and sanctified by some mistaken Interpreters of the Gospel ; Incroachments had been made upon the Rights of the People : And such Incroachments too, as, (after all allowances made, from the Genius of the Constitution at that time less favourable, than it now happily is, to popular Liberty) Candor and even Partiality must own to have been very grievous ones ; and fit to be by every sober and dispassionate method redress'd, and guarded against for the future. The Opposition therefore, that was made to these Incroachments by the few original Champions of Liberty, may, and must be allow'd to, have been Meritorious. A Stand was to be made ; or Civil Liberty might be no more. But, actuated as these first Opposers might be by a Love of their Country ; how soon did they become the deluded Instruments of Men of another Complexion, whose determin'd aim was the Ruin of
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that Constitution, which *They* meant to defend; and whose wicked purposes and deeply laid designs cou'd not be brought to Maturity, but by keeping open and widening the Breach between the Prince and the People? In this distracted State of things the unhappy King, sensible of his Mistakes ^a “refused not to pass any one Bill for the Ease and Security of his Subjects.” And, ^b “if the Breach of Privilege had been greater than ever had been before offer'd, his Acknowledgements and Retractation had been greater than ever King had made.” But all was to no purpose. No Power, less than that which *stilleth the Rage of the Sea*, cou'd at this period have restrain'd *the madness of the People*. The Trumpet was every-where sounded to Rebellion. The Voice of that *Wisdom from above, which is pure, peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated*, was no longer to be heard in our Streets, or in our Senates—it was banish'd even from our Sanctuaries. And a Series of the most fierce and rancorous Opposition, of implacable Malice and Hatred, of rude and personal Insolence to the Sovereign, of dissimulation and falsehood, and every evil Work, were the Harbingers to Ruin, Desolation, and Bloodshed. There were, literally, *five in one House divided, three against two, and two against three; the Father divided against the Son, and the Son against the Father*. For the punishment of this Land, Rebellion triumph'd over Virtue and Loyalty: And to give the last and finishing Stroke to

^a Lord Clarendon, p. 351.

^b p. 363.

expiring

expiring Liberty, such a Scene was acted in the face of the World, after the infamous Pageantry of a Trial, as must for ever disgrace the Annals of our History.

But far be it from me, to exceed the Calls of Duty, by dwelling upon those wretched *Days of Rebuke and of Blasphemy*; or but to seem from thence to take Occasion of raking into the Ashes of our infatuated Forefathers, and of setting those Wounds a bleeding afresh, which Time shou'd long since have heal'd. Better will it become Us, and we shall better answer the Intentions of Government in the Appointment and Continuance of this Solemnity; if, from reviewing the Causes and Principles which brought on this sad Catastrophe, and the fatal Consequences that arose from it, we are led to guard our own *Hearts with all diligence*; to search and see, whether or not, there be, at any time, in any of us, a Spirit of Petulance and Frowardness towards our Superiors; a proneness to discontent, and clamour, and evil speaking, upon every real, or suppos'd Error in Government; and by suppressing these beginnings of Strife, and reforming each the Plague of his own Heart, to endeavour that our National Character may, in these respects, be chang'd for the better.

A prostitution of the Sacred Name of Liberty to the base purposes of private Interest and Ambition, was, by the just judgment of Providence, punish'd by a real deprivation of it, in such a Series of Oppression, under various Species of Tyranny growing
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out of each other, as no other Nation ever experienc'd in the same compass of Time. Be it our Care, to grow wise from the Sins, and from the Sufferings of our Fathers! *Being made whole, let us sin no more*; nor want to be again awaken'd, by a Time of Danger and Distress, to a Sense of our National Advantages,—of that Peace and Tranquillity, that Free Constitution and Government which we enjoy, under a most virtuous and amiable Sovereign.

The Account given, by the noble Historian, of the times immediately preceding those of Confusion, is, that this Country had been blessed with a Series of uncommon Prosperity. But the Transition, we see, from Health and Vigour to Sicknefs and Death, in the Political as well as in the Natural Body, may be instantaneous and momentary.—That We, and our Posterity, may learn to apply this alarming Truth, from the Experience of past Ages only, is a Prayer that can, at no time, be offer'd up unseasonably by every real Lover of his Country.

To conclude, by taking in all that concerns us as Men, or as Englishmen——By the good Providence of God in his general Scheme of Redemption, and by many particular Instances of his Goodness to this Church and Nation—by *the Spirit of the Lord*, we have been call'd unto Liberty, unto Moral, Civil, and Religious Liberty. But a State of Moral Liberty is not a State of irresistible Grace; nor is Civil or Religious Freedom unforfeitable. We may voluntarily deprive ourselves of the former, thro' our
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own fault; the others we may judicially lose, for our punishment. Let us therefore take heed unto Ourselves, by a conduct worthy of that Holy Vocation wherewith we are call'd; by a zealous attachment to our happy Constitution; and by an affectionate Loyalty to our Prince, who is, under God, the Defence and Support of it; lest by an Abuse of our Liberty, we provoke our Heavenly Father to withdraw the most valuable of his Blessings from us, and finally *quench the Spirit of the Lord.*

F I N I S.

